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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 434th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 9 January 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Initial report of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (CRC/C/28/Add.6; HRI/CORE/1/Add.77; CRC/C/Q/LIBYA/1) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Quateen, Mr. Rahil, Mr. Mohsin, Mrs. El Shelli, Mr. Al Awad and Mr. Omar (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), replying to questions asked by members of the Committee at the previous meetings, said that it was the responsibility of the parents to regulate their children's right to privacy, with due regard to their best interests. Those interests did not necessarily coincide with the child's own wishes, particularly in early childhood, when he or she was lacking in judgement. Even older children still needed guidance, protection, and, occasionally, correction. Consequently, he could not assert that Libyan children were automatically granted complete privacy in their early years. Their privacy was respected, but it had to be subject to some restrictions.

3. Expectant working mothers were granted three months' maternity leave on full pay before confinement. Thereafter, they were entitled to one hour's free time each morning and each afternoon in order to breastfeed their children.

4. Under Libyan legislation, it was the responsibility of both parents to guarantee the children's right to education. Article 62 of the Act regulating marriage and divorce specifically referred to the need to ensure children's protection and education from birth until the age of reason, in the case of boys, and until marriage, in the case of girls - a responsibility that was shared throughout the parents' married life. It further provided that, if the parents separated, responsibility devolved on the mother or, if she were absent or incapable, on the maternal grandmother, the father, the paternal grandmother, or another female member of the family, in that order. If the mother left home for any reason, protection of the children remained her responsibility unless and until, in their best interests, a court decided otherwise.

5. On the vexed question of polygamy, the Koran referred to the possibility of a man having two, three or four wives, but exhorted him to content himself with one wife unless he was sure that he could be fair in his treatment of more than one, cautioning him that it was unlikely that he would be able to deal fairly or justly with several wives. Polygamy, which was exceptional, was mentioned in the Koran in order to deal with certain social conditions that occasionally prevailed in society. For instance, if a woman suffering from a chronic illness was unable to fulfil her conjugal duties, the question arose whether it was better for the husband to divorce her and cast her out into the street, or to remarry while keeping her under his roof, thereby securing her dignity and protection.

6. The same question arose where the husband and wife loved one another and wanted children, but where it had been medically established that she was unable to procreate. Again, in Islamic society, as perhaps in all monotheistic societies, sexual relations outside marriage were completely forbidden. Thus polygamy - an exceptional situation affecting perhaps 1 per cent of marriages - could be seen as a way of preventing and regulating moral deviations in society.

7. Polygamy could also be justified as a means of redressing demographic imbalances resulting from the decimation of the male population in time of war. It appeared that a bill proposing the legalization of polygamy had been debated - though subsequently rejected as incompatible with Christian morals - by the German Bundestag in the wake of the Second World War. In short, polygamy was not the general rule, and in no way restricted the rights of women.

8. Mr. KOLOSOV asked whether, mutatis mutandis, the same arguments were adduced in justification of polyandry.

9. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that women had full rights under Islamic law, and could divorce their husbands and remarry, in order to procreate or for any other valid reason.

10. Mr. AL AWAD (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, in accordance with the Shariah, Libyan legislation authorized polygamy, but only in certain exceptional circumstances, for the good of society or to safeguard the health of the man or the woman. It also required the written consent of the wife thereto. Not uncommonly it was the woman who asked her husband to take another wife in addition to herself. In the course of his academic research he had noted that, in response to sociological, economic and medical changes, the incidence of polygamy had declined dramatically. Nonetheless, Libyan legislation was in conformity with the Shariah, and polygamy was thus permitted.

11. In response to a question concerning the assistance available to victims of rape, he said that rape was an extremely rare phenomenon in the Jamahiriya, because of the social controls applied. Where such cases arose, the offender could choose between marrying the victim or being sentenced to up to 25 years' imprisonment in accordance with Libyan law. As for the victim, her state would be diagnosed in a clinic and, if necessary, she would receive psychiatric treatment. Alternatively, she could receive assistance from close relations, if they were willing to provide it.

12. If the victim had no family or there were other obstacles to dealing with the situation in that way, she would be taken to a centre where, with other women, she would receive education and professional training. In such cases, it was usually possible to find a husband for her, and she was able to marry, with material assistance from the State. Such cases were highly problematic and, as a progressive State, the Jamahiriya would be pleased to learn from other countries' experience in that regard.

13. Mr. MOHSIN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that incest and rape were virtually non-existent in Libyan society. Nonetheless, the law provided for

fines or custodial penalties for such offences. At the preventive level, the psychology departments of the universities provided social workers - usually young women - with training in the most up-to-date techniques for the treatment of victims.

14. On domestic violence, he said that difficulties often arose in understanding the concept of domestic violence as referred to in international instruments. Was such violence purely physical, or could it also be psychological violence of the sort that arose in unhappy families? In any case, studies were being conducted to determine the extent of such violence, its causes and the forms it took.

15. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), replying to a question concerning malnutrition, said that, until the imposition of sanctions through the United Nations five years previously, Libyan children had enjoyed a high standard of living, nutrition and health care. Sanctions had inevitably had a negative impact on their access to nutrition, medication, vaccines and teaching materials. The economic embargo and sanctions also hampered a proper analysis of the situation regarding AIDS. As for the question concerning amputations, no such cases had occurred in the Jamahiriya.

16. Mr. RAHIL (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the study undertaken by the Arab Governments in cooperation with, inter alia, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had shown that malnutrition had decreased over the previous 10 years, and also in comparison with neighbouring Arabic-speaking countries. The malnutrition rate stood at 4.7 per cent, and there was little variation between rural and urban areas. There were several reasons for the decrease in malnutrition: in the first place, the Jamahiriya was applying all the provisions of the 1974 Universal Declaration on the Eradiction of Hunger and Malnutrition. Secondly, the Government had undertaken a programme of malnutrition education in the schools. Incidentally, although Libyan family incomes were relatively high, the rich ate badly from a nutritional standpoint and the poor ate much better. Thirdly, the Government had increased the number of mother and child health care centres, and achieved a decrease in the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases. The study also stressed the importance of breastfeeding; in Libya, infant formula was fed to newborns only in exceptional cases.

17. The principal source of AIDS was sexual relations. Libya, however, was a Muslim society, which abided by the traditions of the Shariah, including abstention from extramarital sexual relations. All Libyans were Muslims. In fact, the foreign workers in Libya, from such countries as Chad, Niger, Mali, Pakistan and the Philippines, were also Muslims. Muslim husbands did not commit adultery.

18. When his Government had learned of the existence of AIDS, it had set up, at Tripoli, the International AIDS Centre, which was managed by a joint British and French commission, and which served the whole of Africa. Although the Centre had treated some 80 cases, no cases of AIDS had been detected among Libyan nationals. All foreigners working legally in Libya were subject to medical examinations; it was difficult, however, to conduct medical tests on illegal workers. Incidentally, a French company had supplied an

AIDS-contaminated vaccination serum to Libya in 1993; the Government had lodged a protest with WHO and with the company concerned, and was continuing to pursue its complaint.

19. Mention had been made of the Lockerbie case. In the view of his delegation, the Committee was not the proper forum to air matters of a political nature. Furthermore, the United States of America and United Kingdom were well aware that his Government had played no role in that incident. Two Libyan nationals had, in Malta, checked a suitcase on to a Pan American Airways flight to Frankfurt, which had subsequently blown up over Lockerbie. There was no connection between that suitcase and his Government.

20. Sanctions had been established against the Jamahiriya which were still in effect years after the fact. The country had lost its airlinks and, as a result, there were delays in the arrival of milk and medical supplies, including serum. In 1991, according to WHO figures, vaccination coverage in the Jamahiriya had been 95 per cent, but the coverage had subsequently fallen to 50 per cent. Furthermore, Libyan patients sometimes required treatment that Libyan medical services were unequipped to provide, and the Government was obliged to request permission from United Nations Headquarters in New York to transport them by air to Italy or Switzerland; the patients sometimes died before the permission was granted.

21. His country's Ministry of Health had recently requested the Security Council and the Secretary-General to allow it to carry medicines and serums by air, and to increase the number of countries which could provide medical treatment to Libyan nationals. In the view of his Government, embargoes should not be conducted which had disastrous consequences on the health of a whole people. An entire people had been punished on account of one suitcase.

22. Mrs. EL SHELLI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that women had equal access to social services and social protection measures. The Prophet had said that all persons were responsible for one another. The notion of equality arose from that principle. Families had formerly been proud to produce many children who could work the fields or engage in trade. Patterns of life had changed, and couples tended to plan the size of their families and to use contraceptives. The Government did not compel families to have a certain number of children; families could make that choice freely, according to their own convictions and desires. Modern families averaged 3 to 5 children, as against the traditional 8 to 14.

23. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that legislation enacted in 1991 had defined a disabled person as one who suffered from a condition which prevented him from working and living a normal life in society, a condition that could be either hereditary or acquired. There were five classifications of disabled persons: first, mentally retarded persons, or those whose mental condition prevented them from leading a normal life; secondly, persons suffering from sensory disabilities, such as blindness or partial blindness, which prevented them from leading a normal life, even if they were able to work; thirdly, persons suffering from a physical disability, such as the paralysis of a limb; fourthly, persons suffering from diseases that prevented them from working; and fifthly, persons with a permanent

disability affecting any part of the body. All five categories were granted housing, home care, education, medical care, medical equipment and rehabilitation, and were exempt from the payment of taxes. Disabled persons also benefited from a 50 per cent reduction in the cost of public transportation.

24. Mrs. EL SHELLI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that programmes for the disabled included research in the areas of detection, prevention and care. A fund had been established to monitor cases of disability, and to provide for the rehabilitation of disabled persons. Specialized treatment centres had been established not only in the cities, but also in small towns, villages and rural areas. Proposals had been made to hold medical examinations of couples before marriage, so as to detect possible predispositions.

25. Mr. MOHSIN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that a distinction was made between mental and physical disabilities, and that the two categories benefited from different treatment centres and programmes. Furthermore, the mentally disabled were broken down into two groups, on the basis of intelligence tests, and the latest pedagogical methods were employed to remedy learning problems.

26. The CHAIRPERSON invited questions and comments from members of the Committee on education, leisure and cultural activities (articles 28, 29 and 31) and special protection measures (articles 22, 30 and 32 to 40).

27. Mrs. MBOI asked whether the delegation could provide data on chronic malnutrition or "stunting" which, according to the figures she had received, affected 15.1 per cent of all children under five years of age; the figure for male children was 16.5 per cent and that for children in rural areas 18.1 per cent.

28. If the country was really entirely free of cases of HIV/AIDS, the Jamahiriya was to be congratulated. That situation could not, however, be attributed to Islam, since members of many good Muslim families throughout the world had contracted the disease not just through sexual intercourse but through drug abuse. It was very important that Governments should not deny the existence of HIV/AIDS for religious reasons.

29. She regretted that no data on adolescent health had been provided at a time when children in the 11 to 18 age group were increasingly exposed to health hazards as a result of urbanization, globalization, employment of both parents outside the home and the increasing amount of money in circulation. Problems such as teenage pregnancy, abortion, suicide, accidents, and drug and substance abuse were on the increase everywhere. Was there any provision for monitoring the state of health of adolescents in the Jamahiriya?

30. Mr. AL AWAD (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that a social policy designed specifically for adolescents was pursued by the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Culture in schools, youth clubs and other bodies. Those ministries also undertook joint preventive action based on scientific studies of, for example, suicide, violence and drug abuse and proposed remedies either by adopting new teaching policies or amending the existing ones. During the summer months, programmes

were organized to keep young people occupied, such as summer camps, sporting events and scouting activities. A global review of the social situation of children, adolescents and women was planned in the context of current studies on the development of human resources and capacities which were being conducted in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF. Existing programmes would be amended in the light of the findings.

31. Mrs. PALME said she failed to understand how a rape victim could accept the idea of marrying the perpetrator as a solution to the problem.

32. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether there was any provision for treatment of young boys who had been traumatized by homosexual contacts with older men.

33. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked whether there were any figures indicating trends in the number of abortions conducted legally for medical reasons. How was pregnancy regulated and were there any perceptible upward or downward trends in the use of contraceptives? The suicide statistics covered only the years up to 1992 and she would like to see more recent statistics regarding cases of suicide and para-suicide. More detailed information regarding trends in the number of underdeveloped children in the first year of life and, more generally, in the 0 to 10 age group would also be welcome and, with regard to maternal health, she wished to know whether there was a programme for monitoring the number of compulsory medical visits for women prior to confinement and after giving birth.

34. Mrs. KARP asked whether the Libyan definition of rape and domestic violence included rape within marriage and, if so, whether the law was enforced in that context. She drew attention to the possible impact of domestic violence on the children who witnessed it in the home and suffered alongside the victims. Did the existing services cater for children's needs arising from indirect violence inflicted on one of the parents?

35. It appeared that research on sexual abuse within the family was being conducted and she would like to hear what the findings were. Was there a ban on the publication of the names of victims of rape or child sexual abuse? For various reasons, particularly the double victimization of female rape victims, it was important to ensure that victims could come forward without fear of publicity.

36. Were the manpower and funds available for programmes on behalf of the disabled sufficient to cover all needs or did some children have to wait for long periods before receiving care?

37. How many children were currently in pre-trial detention or in prison? What kinds of offences were they usually charged with and what was the term of imprisonment for the offences concerned? Were there any alternatives to custodial punishment for young offenders? Although children under the age of 14 years were not criminally responsible, it would seem that the courts could take non-penal action against delinquents. How could such children defend themselves against, for example, being sent to an institution without due legal process?

38. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO, noting that education was compulsory and free of charge, asked whether registration and textbooks were also free and whether poor families received any form of assistance. What measures were taken to inform people, especially in remote areas, of the compulsory nature of education and to monitor compliance with the law? She requested statistics on repetition rates, the university enrolment rate and the literacy rate. How did the Government address the problem of youth employment, especially in the case of school leavers?

39. She welcomed the Libyan programme for the assistance of children in emergency circumstances, but would like to know what provision was made for children from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Sudan and Lebanon. Was there a special programme or were they catered for under the general social welfare scheme? What was the situation in respect of their families?

40. Mrs. PALME asked what the Jamahiriya's position was regarding the various international instruments concerning refugees, in particular the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

41. A Libyan delegation had attended the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children at which a holistic perspective on article 34 of the Convention had been discussed and a Declaration and Agenda for Action had been adopted. She would like to know how work was proceeding on a Libyan national plan of action.

42. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked what the reasons were for the 10 per cent drop-out rate from Libyan schools. Were there scholarships to enable children over the age of 15 years to continue their studies after the period of compulsory education? She also wondered whether it was common for parents to engage in play with children and would like to hear about typical family games involving parents and children.

43. Mrs. MBOI inquired about children working in hazardous situations that could be detrimental to their development. She noted that the Libyan Labour Code prohibited certain categories of employment for children but made an exception in the case of family undertakings and some types of agricultural work, although employment in such circumstances could also prove hazardous. Was there any way of monitoring those situations and protecting the child?

44. The CHAIRPERSON asked about attitudes in the Jamahiriya to the inclusion of females in the teaching profession. Was it possible for females to teach male students and vice versa?

45. Referring to paragraph 140 of the report, she noted that the State had a duty to assist individuals, regardless of their religious belief or political affiliation, in exercising their right to education. As a member of the delegation had stated that Islam was the only religion in the country, she wondered how the right of a person with different religious beliefs could be accommodated in practical terms.

46. In the light of the denunciation of domestic service in paragraph 160 of the report as a form of exploitation or even slavery, she asked whether it was true that a number of foreigners were employed in domestic service in the Jamahiriya?

47. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the human embryo enjoyed a right to life under Libyan law from the moment of conception and that abortion was therefore a crime. The only exception was where the pregnancy, if carried to term, presented a serious threat to the life of the mother.

48. Mr. RAHIL (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) mentioned the case of a woman with ischaemic heart disease for whom an abortion had been performed. As she had had a triple Caesarean section, it was actually illegal for her to carry another pregnancy to term. In such cases, the polyclinic urged a couple not to have another child but its advice was not always followed. Abortions were also performed in cases of infectious disease or early detection of malformation.

49. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that sexually deviant behaviour was viewed as both religiously and legally punishable in the Jamahiriya. Officially and socially, therefore, it did not exist. The Islamic religion and Libyan law viewed such behaviour not as a matter of individual freedom but as a serious social concern.

50. Not all cases of rape necessarily resulted in a forced marriage. The important thing was that the guilty party should be punished severely. The judge had to take the circumstances into account and ascertain whether, for instance, a marriage would constitute a form of punishment of the victim. If he was convinced that the circumstances warranted marriage, the rapist was forced to accede. Otherwise he was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

51. Mr. AL AWAD (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), commenting on child protection, said that children received medical attention in centres attached to hospitals and clinics and psychological and social counselling from officers at school. Studies to assess the implementation of the programme for protection of children were carried out by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the universities and intergovernmental organizations. In 1993, a Commission on Youth Problems had assessed the situation and changes had subsequently been made to the system.

52. Globalization had given rise to a number of social transformations. The world had, indeed, become an interdependent place, but there was still room for social diversity. Globalization should not constitute a threat to a country's religious and cultural values.

53. As a social scientist, he was aware that rape within marriage did occur. Human beings were not angels and it was thus not impossible in any society. In the Jamahiriya, however, the prevailing religious and cultural values were such as to prevent such situations from arising. If a woman - or a man - were to complain of a spouse's neglect or cruelty, something which could occur in any society, a social solution was usually found. The ill-treated wife would confide in an older woman who would approach the man and tell him of his error. Relatives or religious figures might also intervene.

54. In each region, local people's committees gave rulings on social questions, such as differences of opinion between a mother and her child, or domestic financial disagreements between spouses. If the situation was not resolved, the matter could be referred to a court and assessed by a judge competent in social affairs, and in accordance with Shariah law.

55. Libyan law prohibited the employment of children below the age of 18. Children were entitled to help their parents in the agricultural sector but, if they worked in factories, the personnel bureaux in each workplace, under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, would hear of the matter and the employer would be arrested and punished.

56. Children below the age of 18 years were not considered to be criminally responsible. A child who committed an offence was tried before a juvenile court and sent to a special rehabilitation centre, not to prison. The judge might also decide to reduce the statutory penalty.

57. There were no refugee children as such in the Jamahiriya. The previous year, some children had come there on a visit from Bosnia, accompanied by their own teachers who educated them according to their own language and curriculum. They had subsequently returned home.

58. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the proportion of men and women in education was almost equal and that women attended mixed universities. There were 80,000 female teachers, amounting to some 45 per cent of the profession. The law obliged parents to send their children to school, under penalty of fines. Both Libyan and foreign children residing in Libya were entitled to free education, and the curriculum was identical for all. Teaching methods were those approved in all Arab countries.

59. The 1.5 million foreigners residing in Libya also had the right to send their children to private schools, and to establish such schools if they so desired. There were numerous foreign schools teaching the French, English, Indian or Pakistani curricula.

60. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee wished to draw attention to a number of areas of concern including the desirability of establishing a mechanism to assist the various ministries in coordinating the implementation of the Convention. The delegation might also wish to review its opinion that a mechanism for addressing children's complaints was not required. There was also need for further dissemination of the Convention in both rural and urban areas. The Committee also typically recommended that there should be special training for persons involved in implementing the Convention in the educational, social and legal fields.

61. The Committee was also concerned at the apparent absence of participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the preparation of the country report, given the importance of having a variety of viewpoints for the purposes of impartiality. In the case of the Higher Committee for Child Welfare, for example, the "NGO" seemed to be identical with the Government.

62. In its concluding observations, the Committee would also be raising the issue of early and forced marriages. Certain general principles with respect

to the rights of children in Libya required further delineation, as in the case of the status of children born "out-of-wedlock". Such language should be deleted from all administrative directives and legislation in order to eliminate the current legal discrimination. The issue of domestic violence, both sexual and physical, also needed to be further addressed. Although the Committee was satisfied that the health and education of children in Libya was of a high standard, additional statistics would be welcomed, including data on drop-out rates.

63. Mrs. KARP assured the delegation that the positive aspects of the protection of children's rights in Libya would receive mention in the Committee's concluding observations. She nonetheless stressed the importance of collecting disaggregated data to encompass all fields of children's rights, including children in special situations, so that assessment of programmes and practices relating, inter alia, to disabled children or children in the juvenile justice system could be based on more detailed knowledge. Children's rights should be translated into a practical code of work and ethics for the various professionals working with children, including legislators, social workers, psychologists and law-enforcement personnel.

64. Mrs. PALME welcomed the progress made in the Jamahiriya with respect to child health and education, which was outstanding compared to other countries of the region. There had also been improvements in the field of children's nutrition, although problems of stunted growth and diarrhoea still prevailed. The Government's ambitious programme to ensure that children with disabilities grew up in close relation to their families and were educated in ordinary schools, while not losing the opportunity to receive specialized support, also deserved praise.

65. One concern was that, although there had been an enormous development in equality between boys and girls in the domain of health, there still appeared to be elements of difference in the treatment of the two sexes, especially with regard to inheritance.

66. Mr. KOLOSOV said that the Committee should acknowledge the negative effect of the United Nations embargo on the situation of children in the Jamahiriya, particularly in the light of General Comment 8 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

67. Turning to the issue of legislation, he said that it was the first instance in his experience of children under seven years of age being deprived of the right to make their views known. There should be a specific reference to children in all laws, since the general public was not always aware that the term "citizen" covered all persons, including those who had not yet attained the age of majority. A special children's code was needed, even though the Convention had been made a part of domestic legislation, and that required additional thought and discussion by the Government.

68. It should not be forgotten that a Government was responsible for all the children on its territory, including the children of non-citizens such as migrant workers. Even if there was currently no discrimination, practices could always change. Laws should thus refer not merely to citizens, but to everyone under the jurisdiction of the Jamahiriya.

69. One of the ambitions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was to eradicate statelessness, which was why article 7, paragraph 2, obliged States to take all possible measures to ensure that every child received a nationality. That provision also applied to the Jamahiriya, even if the number of instances was limited.

70. Mr. QUATEEN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that there was full agreement concerning the provisions and objectives of the Convention. His country had ratified the instrument precisely because his Government believed in its importance. However, although States must group themselves around internationally accepted principles, it must not be forgotten that different societies espoused different ideas and different religions, and that they could not always see an issue from the same perspective. Objectives could be agreed upon but mechanisms for implementation and coordination should not be imposed. Each country had its own values and customs, and any attempt to make all countries fit into the same mould would inevitably be counter-productive.

71. Statistics were available on early marriage, but it was an issue that touched upon questions connected with religion. It must be stressed that no legislation or moral principles based on Islam could be changed. Conventions and laws could be modified, but religion could not, since it formed the very foundation of Libyan society. Time had unfortunately not allowed for a discussion of the subject of incest.

72. The Higher Committee for Children was an NGO in its own right. Outside the framework of UNICEF and in contact with the Government, it provided follow-up on issues relating to children's rights.

73. The valuable comments of the Committee would be taken into account, founded as they were upon a desire to improve the situation of children throughout the world. It was to be hoped that the Committee would, in its turn, take account of the suffering of Libyan children resulting from the unjust embargo imposed by the United Nations, and that it would adopt a positive attitude in that regard.

74. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Convention had been carefully drafted to be applicable to the diversity of the world's religious and legal systems. The reporting procedure should not be seen as a bureaucratic process but as an ongoing challenge for all the States parties to the Convention. The Committee thus looked forward to receiving details in the Jamahiriya's second periodic report of its continued commitment to ameliorating the situation of children in the country.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.